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ABSTRACT

This presentation describes an English graduate seminar in Local Color and Regionalism in American Literature at Western Kentucky University that was set up as an experimental hybrid course, i.e., roughly 60% face-to-face and 40% Web course (Web quest format). The focus is on the four tasks that comprised the Web quest segment of the course: (1) a chart or list identifying the characteristics of local color and regionalism as defined by the individual student and based upon the materials studied in the course; (2) an annotated Web-liography of two or more writers in one school of local color or regionalism, or material ready for transfer to a Web page that might be used in the classroom to teach a single writer; (3) an analytical essay pointing out influences of local color and regionalism in a single work by a contemporary writer; and (4) a group project, consisting of development of a Web quest suitable for classroom use. The course syllabus and guidelines for task four are appended. (MES)

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ED 479 251

The Best of Two Worlds: Combining ITV and Web Quests to Strengthen Distance Learning

By Charmaine Mosby

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The Best of Two Worlds: Combining ITV and Web Quests to Strengthen Distance Learning

By: Charmaine Mosby
Track 2 - Innovation and Future Implementation in Instructional Technology
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Abstract

Increasing emphasis upon Distance Learning demands creative approaches for course delivery, preferably combining advantages of interactive television and the web. My response was to set up a graduate seminar as an experimental hybrid course: roughly 60% face-to-face and 40% web course (web quest format). This presentation outlines the process of course development, explains my choices, and uses this seminar to illustrate the efficiency of hybrid courses.

Proceeding

The professionalism of twenty-first century teacher preparation is continually growing: teacher standards are becoming more rigorous, methods of delivery are becoming more diversified, and even the terminology is becoming more precise. In fact, a person who took the National Teachers Exam forty years ago would find a number of unfamiliar items on this year's PRAXIS. Despite these obvious and significant changes, university educators' basic goals remain the same:

- to help public school teachers prepare students to live and work in today's electronic world (ISTE,2000),
- to make education widely accessible, both physically and in terms of learning styles,
- to make the preparation and continued training of teachers as cost effective

as possible without sacrificing the quality of instruction or the degree of student involvement in the learning process.

Ideally, university faculty can best assist their students by modeling the kinds of creative instruction these students will need to develop in the classroom (Metze, 2002).

With the increasing emphasis upon teacher accountability, most states are demanding that both current and future teachers meet a wide-ranging set of professional standards that delineate requirements in areas from community involvement to use of technology (New Teacher Standards, 1999). These teachers are also expected to hone their skills in graduate classes taken in the summer and during the school terms. In states such as Kentucky, where many teachers live two or more hours' drive from a university, evening graduate classes once were difficult to schedule. For these students, the answer has been distance learning.

Historically there have been three categories or stages of distance learning. Twenty-five years ago, universities sent graduate faculty to several satellite locations, usually forty to seventy-five miles from the main campus. This delivery mode was time-consuming for the faculty and expensive for the university. More recently, though, interactive television (ITV) has made faculty travel less necessary. Problems still exist, however. While less time-consuming than a seventy-five mile drive, preparation for these classes requires significantly more time than the faculty member would be likely to spend preparing for a face-to-face course. In addition to the study and grading required in teaching any course, the instructor must devise creative ways to elicit discussion and establish a sense of community with the students at distant sites. Moreover, even though most ITV instructors soon become quite proficient in these areas, the cost of setting up and maintaining a site (more than $60,000 just to set up one site) necessarily limits their number and thus the number of students who can benefit from them. The third delivery mode, online instruction, has not proven to be a panacea either. Innovative instructors have modeled the kinds of classroom activities that public school teachers may develop for their students, but the lack of direct contact can result in mis-communications that leave students confused and intimidated by the technology.

Obviously today's distance learning requires faculty and administrators to address the problem of delivery modes without reducing their emphasis upon educators' three traditional goals. The best solution seems to be to blend personal contact, interactive technology, and online platforms, but implementing this solution will require both faculty and administrators to exert their best problem-solving skills and use every type of support available.

One step in this process was a graduate English course developed at Western Kentucky University during the July summer session in 2002. For five weeks, students in Bowling Green, Elizabethtown, and Owensboro (linked by ITV) read and researched Local Color and Regionalism in American Literature. The class, which included approximately sixty per cent personal contact and forty per cent

online work, was essentially a self-selected group of teachers and future teachers, whose level of computer skills ranged from proficiency to unfamiliarity. Meeting the class in standard formats allowed the instructor to emphasize major concepts and provide immediate answers; students also were reassured that the instructor was available in person and by ITV as well as by e-mail. Because the overall format was experimental, the designated class was a summer course taken primarily by teachers, for whom the web components would model the kind of instruction mandated by state technology standards. Students were made aware of the course design before they registered (cf. Appendix A), and they were assured that they would not be graded on their computer skills.

The web quest segment consisted of four tasks ranging from knowledge of the material to analysis and application of the materials and literary techniques discussed. Three of the four were individual tasks, but the most extensive was a group assignment. Scaffolding was provided in the form of Internet links and supplemental materials, including links to online versions of each story discussed. The grade in the course was based in part upon the students' class participation, but in large measure upon their completion of the four assigned tasks. Using the BlackBoard delivery system meant that all work delivered through the system had to be sent in MSWord; therefore, the students were required to create their web pages only in story board format, though several who had web access developed and posted actual pages.

Task One (due at the end of the course) was a chart or list identifying the characteristics of Local Color and Regionalism as defined by the individual student and based upon the materials studied in this course. This task represented 25% of the student's grade in the course.

Task Two (due in Week Three) involved a choice of projects:

- an annotated web-liography of two or more writers in one school of Local Color /or/ Regionalism [in MLA format with brief descriptive title for the site]
- material (in MSWord) ready for transfer to a web page [but not submitted in HTML] that might be used in the classroom to teach a single writer, possibly one of those studied in this course. The web page design was not stipulated; so the students were free to emphasize a variety of learning styles.

This task represented 20% of the course grade.

Task Three (due in Week Four) was an analytical essay pointing out influences of Local Color and Regionalism in a single work by a contemporary writer. The contemporary short story could be the work of a young adult or popular culture writer. This task accounted for 15% of the grade in the course.

Task Four was the group project. Each group (usually 4-5 people) developed a web quest suitable for classroom use. As part of this process, the group

- explored web quest theory and formats, choosing one format
- decided upon the amount of "scaffolding" (support material)—a decision based on the literary sophistication and computer skills of the intended users [A Web Quest for a high school class probably requires more and different types of scaffolding than that supplied in this course.]
- determined the specific tasks to be completed by the students [The number and complexity depends on the time allotted, the content, the learning goals, and the grade level of the students.]
- set up the format (based upon the model or models chosen) with learning goals and tasks
- submitted the completed group project with individual roles indicated. [The task instructions suggested that each section carry a concluding byline, though the participants' roles could be listed at either the beginning or the end. Participants were also asked to include their e-mail addresses in the bylines.]

This task accounted for 40% of the grade in the course.

In addition to the extensive explanatory and content links, the students were given a detailed description of the process to be followed for each task (cf. Appendix B), but several major decisions about content and allocation of responsibilities were left to the groups and individuals. Grading rubrics were supplied, however.

Throughout the course, student participation was above average, and in the evaluation assignment (Week Five), feedback was unanimously positive. The individual work was excellent, and the group projects were outstanding. Even those students who initially lacked confidence in their computer skills said they now felt comfortable using web quests and other online resources in their classrooms. Several students were so intrigued with the instructional possibilities of web pages and web quests that they e-mailed the instructor copies of the material they developed for their fall semester classes. The logical conclusion was that the blended mode of delivery had enhanced the learning process.

Moreover, this experiment seemed to demonstrate that the blended course could be successful using only half the ITV resources being used in traditional courses. Thus, the carefully constructed blended course has been shown to achieve the educator's three basic goals: quality learning, accessibility, and cost effectiveness.

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APPENDIX A

English 596

Local Color and Regionalism

Developed by Dr. Charmaine Allmon Mosby

Overview

In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries specific types of short fiction arose in various places throughout the United States. This short fiction reflected the characteristics and interests of specific groups at specific times and places. In the late nineteenth century this movement was known as local color, and it is usually seen as a precursor of literary realism. In the twentieth century this trend has continued with added elements derived from literary movements such as romanticism, naturalism, and minimalism This WebQuest examines the specific types of local color and regionalism. It directs learners to investigate the types (or "schools") of local color, demonstrate each one's link to a specific time and place, and trace the influence on so-called "mainstream" American literature.

Specific content area: ENG 596 Local Color and Regionalism in American Literature

Kentucky Learning Goals and Academic Expectations: 1.16; 2.19; 1.10; 1.11; 1.12; 2.25; 2.26; 2.24; 2.23; 6.1; 6.2

Background

After the American Civil War, mass circulation magazines flourished, especially in the Northeast, creating a market for short fiction. Attempting to satisfy their readers' curiosity about quaint language and customs in various remote sections of the newly reunited nation, editors sought out short story writers in locales that those readers might consider exotic or at least unusual. The initial result was the movement usually referred to as Local Color, which arose primarily in New England, the plantation South, the Creole South, the Southern Mountains, and Gold-Rush California. While these so-call "schools" of Local Color varied in physical details such as setting and diction, generally the purpose and tone were very similar. Eventually, as readers began to tire of these stories, some 20th century writers adapted many of the same techniques for purposes of social history and social criticism, discussing specific regional and even national issues. By the Twenties and Thirties, however, American readers were again becoming

interested in reading about life in small communities, and regionalism became a significant literary force. Fed by regional self-awareness, this movement has continued to grow in scope and influence, expanding the old Local Color schools to include areas as geographically and culturally diverse as the Appalachian South; the prairie and upper Midwest; the rural and small-town South; frontier areas such as the Southwest and Alaska; and even established ethnic and cultural communities in urban America. In short, the diversity of this movement has continued to revitalize American short fiction.

Course Requirements

During this 5-week session, the class will meet as a group at least once a week to discuss specific works by writers such as George Washington Cable, Charles Chesnutt, Mary Noailles Murfree (Charles Egbert Craddock), Jesse Stuart, Sarah Orne Jewett, Bret Harte, Eudora Welty, and Erskine Caldwell. All of the assigned works are available as online texts, and links to them are provided. In these sessions we will share information, answer questions, and discuss/solve problems that arise as students work through the tasks in the model English 596 Web Quest. These graduate students will be expected individually to complete three assignments in the model web quest and then, working in groups, to create similar web quests that explore and characteristics, representative writers, and influence of a specific Local Color school. In the course of this exercise, these teachers and future teachers will be expected to identify useful resources and create a series of activities that will guide their students in challenging research and learning activities. Scaffolding such as that provided in the model English 596 Web Quest should be provided. Because everyone is to some extent a novice in the construction of web quests, support and advice will be provided.

Significance of the Project

Today's students are products of the electronic age. While it is essential to introduce them to print sources for their research, it is also important to show them that research in the 21st century must also incorporate information gained from Internet sources. In the course of this instruction, these web quests should provide a framework for establishing the reliability of information gleaned from any kind of source.

Potential Problems

Because some schools of literary criticism have tended to dismiss Local Color and Regionalism as chauvinistic or even provincial, students' web quests should establish the importance of geographical and cultural factors in shaping literature generally and especially the group being considered. The major questions to be answered are how a specific work is affected/strengthened by its ties to a distinct region and how that regional "school" has influenced the development of mainstream American literature. The individual student's critical stance obviously will affect his/her assessment of specific works, and the group may choose to build a consensus or to present a range of interpretations carefully linked to

specific critical theories. It is essential to remember, however, that these quests are being created for high school students, not other graduate classes.

Questions to Be Addressed

- When was the heyday of each of these movements?
- Who were these writers?
- Where were most of these writers living and writing?
- What specific themes and techniques did they use?
- Who read these stories and why?
- How did these movements influence the mainstream of American literature?

Grades in the Course

The grade in the course will be based upon the students' completion of the four assigned tasks (see Assignment section).

Task One (due at the end of the course) is a chart or list identifying the characteristics of Local Color and Regionalism as defined by the individual student and based upon the materials studied in this course. This task represents 25% of the student's grade in the course.

Task Two (due in Week Three) involves a choice of projects:

- a web-liography of two or more writers in one school of Local Color /or/ Regionalism [in MLA format with brief descriptive title for the site]
- material (in MSWord) ready for transfer to a web page [but not in HTML, please] you might use in the classroom to teach a single writer, possibly one of those studied in this course.

This task represents 20% of the course grade.

Task Three (due in Week Four) is an analytical essay pointing out influences of Local Color and Regionalism in a single work by a contemporary writer. The contemporary short story may be the work of a young adult or popular culture writer. This task will account for 15% of the grade in the course.

Task Four is a group project. Each group (probably 4-5 people) will create a web quest suitable for classroom use. As part of this process, the group will

- explore web quest theory and formats, choosing one
- decide upon the amount of so-called "scaffolding" (support material)—a decision based upon the literary sophistication and computer skills of the intended users [a Web Quest for a high school class probably will require more and different types of scaffolding than that supplied in this course.]
- determine the specific tasks to be completed by the students [The number and complexity will depend on the time allotted, the content, the learning

goals, and the grade level of the students.]
- set up the format (based upon the model or models chosen) with learning goals and tasks
- submit the completed group project with individual roles indicated. [Probably each section will carry a concluding byline, though the participants' roles may be listed at either the beginning or the end. Perhaps the participants' e-mail addresses should be included in the byline.]

This task will account for 40% of the grade in the course.

Process for Task Four

The group as a whole should decide the scope and breadth of the web quest; thus, the individual members of the group may gather some basic information about specific writers that could be included, but the finished list of writers should be a group decision. If possible, the allocation of responsibilities should also be a matter of consensus.

Within each generating group, students must assume specific roles. For example, one student might establish sources and links related to the geographical, historical, and cultural background. That student would also propose specific student tasks related to that material. Two or three other group members might focus on representative writers, reviewing specific works and developing student resources and activities. A student especially adept at working with graphics or document design might assume overall responsibility for guiding the rest of the group through that part of the activity. In addition, the group may select one person to act as an overall editor in order to maintain consistency of format. The group's project should carry the names of only those students who have successfully completed their tasks as agreed upon by the group. Any student who withdraws from the group project will be expected to complete Task Four on his/her own.

Each group's finished product should be submitted to the professor on a floppy disk or cd-rw for grading, with the eventual goal of posting on the course web site for other groups to see. The bases for grading are as follows:

- Objectives are reasonable, appropriate, and clearly stated.
- Specific writers and works are well-chosen and representative.
- Assigned tasks are challenging, creative, and relevant, with possibilities for students to exercise initiative.
- Resources are reliable, varied, and sufficient in number.
- Design is attractive, engaging, and easy to navigate.

APPENDIX B

Task Four

This task, which represents 40% of your course grade, involves participation (with a group of your peers) in the creation of a web quest based upon some of the material available to you in this course.

Guidelines for Task Four:

Each group (probably 4-5 people) will create a flowchart or "story board" of a web quest suitable for classroom use. As part of this process, the group as a whole will

- give me a list of the group members so I can set up the group apparatus [discussion board, web page, chat room] for each group
- notify me of the group's web quest subject
- allocate the responsibility for various tasks to individual group members
- explore web quest theory and formats, choosing one [see the lists of Web Quest resources]
- determine the educational goals of this web quest [including the students' actual "products"]
- decide upon the amount of so-called "scaffolding" (support material) to be included—a decision based upon the literary sophistication and computer skills of the intended users [include references to web sites you intend your students to use—actual links are not required]
- determine the specific tasks to be completed by the students [The number and complexity depend upon the time allotted, the content, the learning goals, and the grade level of the students.]
- set up the format (based upon the model or models chosen) with learning goals and tasks specifically addressed
- develop the details of the web quest links and activities
- assemble the web quest flowchart in MSWord, not HTML [The use of graphics and special effects may be indicated in the text, but again their inclusion in this document is not required. In fact, the drop box in Course Info may not accept some of them.]
- edit the finished web quest for clarity, completeness, and mechanical correctness
- submit the completed group project with individual roles indicated. [Probably each section will carry a concluding byline, though the participants' roles may be listed either at the beginning or the end. Perhaps the participants' e-mail address should be included in the byline.]

To further clarify the instructions, I have copied the following material from the Course Requirements page:

Process for Task Four

The group as a whole should decide the scope and breadth of the web quest; thus, the individual members of the group may gather some basic information about specific writers that could be included, but the finished list of writers should be a group decision. If possible, the allocation of responsibilities should also be a

matter of consensus.

Within each generating group, students must assume specific roles. For example, one student might establish sources and links related to the geographical, historical, and cultural background. That student would also propose specific student tasks related to that material. Two or three other group members might focus on representative writers, reviewing specific works and developing student resources and activities. A student especially adept at working with graphics or document design might assume overall responsibility for guiding the rest of the group through that part of the activity. In addition, the group may select one person to act as an overall editor in order to maintain consistency of format. The group's project should carry the names of only those students who have successfully completed their tasks as agreed upon by the group. Any student who withdraws from the group project will be expected to complete Task Four on his/her own.

Each group's finished product should be submitted to the professor on disk or cd-rw for grading, with the eventual goal of posting on the course web site (edtech server) for other groups to see.

The Bases for Task Four Grades:

- Objectives are reasonable, appropriate, and clearly stated (20% of task grade)
- Specific writers and works are well-chosen and representative (20 % of task grade)
- Assigned tasks are challenging, creative, and relevant, with possibilities for students to exercise initiative (25 % of task grade)
- Resources are reliable, varied, and sufficient in number (20 % of task grade)
- Design is attractive, engaging, and easy to navigate (15 % of task grade)

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